WAR GAMI

Hurlburt Field volunteers spend some duty time coaching youngsters in chess

By DONNA HATCH

ARY ESTHER — It's a cen-turies-old game that has been passed down through the gen-

Ly L passed down through the generations. Now, students at Mary Esther Elementary School are learning to play chess, thanks to a cadre of men and women from Hurlburt Field.

The Mary Esther Elementary School Chess Club is the brainchild of Marine Corps Lt. Col. Charles Frawley, who said he is able to carry out his mission with the help of a group of dedicated volunteer coaches and the support of Kevin Dunleavy and Rocky Farry, both colonels at Hurlburt Field.

"I was given approval to ask for vol-

colonels at Hurlburt Field.
"I was given approval to ask for volunteers who would be able to spend some of their duty lime, twice a month, to coach chess at the school," said Frawley, a Marine Corps liaison officer stationed at Hurlburt.

The coaching roster boasts 23 men

and women -military and civilian — who stop off on their way to work (many in uniway to work (many in uniform) to mentor the bid a constant of the the kids in the

INSIDE

■ Chess is becoming

art of the game.
Each mentor must have a current security clearance or police records check, which is necessary in order to work on

the campus.
The chess club, which is registered with the U.S. Chess Federation, meets "from 0730 to 0830, before school starts," in the school's cafeteria on the first and third Friday of the month. The group,

in the school's cateteria on the first and third Friday's cateteria on the first and third friday of the month. The group, which began meeting in October, is open to third, fourth- and fitth-graders.

"We focus on rules and regs, basics of the game, offer a chess tip at the beginning of each session, and try to provide a positive role model, in terms of our professionalism," said Frawley, a former chess mentor at Plew Elementary School in Niceville.

"We also emphasize sportsmanship." Dapline Player, principal at Mary Esther Elementary, said the game is a tool for teaching other skills as well, "such as critical thinking, and can help build student self-esteem."

"At the school, we're very much an advocate of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence," said Player, referring to the Harvard researcher who introduced the idea of different kinds of intelligences.

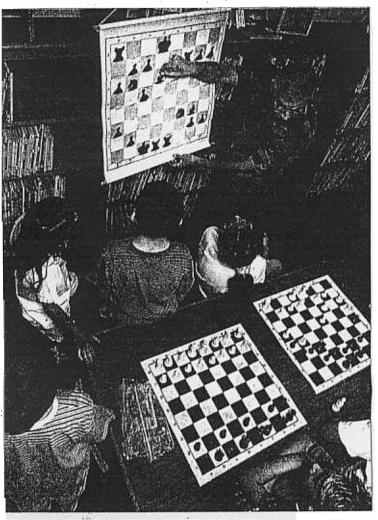
Elever "onthweisetically" accepted

gences.
Player "enthusiastically" accepted
Prawley's proposal to initiate a team at
her school. "Cardner believed that that
people are smart in at least eight ways,
and one of those ways is visual/spatial."
She said, "To understand chess your
need to be able to visualize in your
mind's eye what would happen next if
you move this piece or that piece. If a
child is strong in that area, the chess
club gives that child an opportunity to
shine."

The volunteer mentors teach the kids how to plan and execute an attack and how to reach an objective through logic

and follow through.

In the game of chess, all of the player's forces are mobilized to gain an advantage of some sort over the oppo-





Above, Senior Master Sgt. Charles to Mary Esther Elementary School Chess Club members some of the strategic moves they can make during play. At left, Shannon Page contemplates her next move against her opponent, Senior Airman Dedrick Barnum, during a recent Friday morning game.

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nent, said Senior Master Sgt. Charles Hawkins, who coaches the kids.

"The ultimate objective: capture your opponent's king. It's all about learning strategy and tactic," said Hawkins, who once played collegiate level chess and uses the lessons learned in his current role in the military. "It's very similar, in theory, to what is experienced on the battlefield."

The war analogy is not lost on some of the young players. A third of the school's student body is from military families, said Player. Several kids in the group have parents who have been deployed to fight the war in Afghanistan. Fourth-grader Incee

Netinai said he enjoys the "way you have to think and the strategy" that goes into each game, "kind of like you do in

war.
"We learn how to not let pieces open to attack and how to be ready for the next move," said Incee, who lives in Navarre. "I know how to play a real game now — and I'm beating people." Jesse Horton, 10, of Fort

Walton Beach, said he learned how to play at his grandmother's knee and joined the club to improve his skills.

"When I think about the

chessboard, I think about i like a big battlefield and tr to find your enemies and w ning the war," said the four grader. "I'm getting better,

Ten-year-old Mariah Turman said the Mary Est **Elementary School Chess** is more than just learning to move chess piece on a board; it also teaches peop how to maneuver safely through life.

"It teaches logic and sh you to survey your surrou ings and how to protect yo self from being vulnerable attack," said the fifth-grad the daughter of an Air For reservist, who called the g "exhilarating."

"You never know what other player is going to do whatever they do I know h to block them," she said. " have to put a pawn or som thing non-valuable there, something I don't care abo losing."

She said the correlation between the chessboard a the battlefield is obvious to

.. "I think of the king piec America and I need to pro it so it won't get hurt," Ma said. "I think about that so times when I watch the ne

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